Milwaukee JOURNAL, May 29, 1979, p. 8

My Nightmare Year in A Bizarre Satanic Cult

"It was a world of madness, chaos, depression and violence," said Dr. William S. Bainbridge, recalling the real-life nightmare he experienced as an undercover member of a bizarre satanic cult.

For almost a year, Dr. Bainbridge lived a secret, terrifying second life as a member of "The Power" cult, which worships both Satan and Christ.

In an exclusive ENQUIRER interview he told how he was marked for violence . . . had to beg for food on the streets . . . and witnessed shocking brutality — including one incident in which a cultist punched a pregnant woman in the stomach.

Bainbridge — who wrote a book about his experiences called "Satan's Power: A Deviant Psychotherapy Cult" — suddenly found himself in the midst of a bitter cult feud when he befriended one member who was disliked by several others.

"One of the members who hated this man turned on me and shouted, 'You're a marked man!' " recalled Bainbridge, an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Washington, Seattle.

"The man, an ex-Hell's Angel who had been convicted of assault, boasted to his friends that he was going to beat me up." Other members managed to stave off an attack.

But Bainbridge knew he was living on top of a powder keg that threatened to explode at any minute.

"From day to day you never knew what was going to happen," he told The ENQUIRER. "I once saw a young man kicked down a flight of stairs — simply because he was standing at the top.

"The most violent member was a man who called himself Al Capone. He punched a woman in the stomach when she was pregnant.

"Another recruit boasted that he had killed three men."

Bainbridge and other low-ranking members "were treated like slaves" and forced out into the streets to beg for money.

"We were told, 'Don't come home unless you meet your quota,' " he said. Daily quotas varied "from $60 to $100."

Bainbridge was frequently sent to produce houses to scrounge for old or spoiled food — and to buy delicacies for higher-ups.

"One day I went to the supermarket and purchased a pork roast for the cult rulers to cook in private while the rest of us ate a meal made entirely of rice," he recalled. "Another favorite meal for us was carrot stew."

Low-ranking members, he quickly discovered, did all the "dirty work" — washing floors, painting, cleaning, fixing things — while high-ranking members lounged and gave orders.

Solidarity within the cult was built on "emotion, fantasy and sex," according to Bainbridge.

And individual secrets were voided by routine lie detector tests, he said.

In bizarre, candlelit ceremonies, the black-robed leaders pledged themselves before a large mask of Satan's head — giving a powerful sense of unity to the whole group.

Wide-open sexual practices drew new recruits — including teenagers and two youngsters who'd been training to become Catholic nuns — and helped keep members from straying.

Once Bainbridge's cover was almost blown when the hidden tape recorder he used for his research malfunctioned during a secret ritual — and began to hum.

He narrowly avoided detection by faking a wheeze to hide the hum.

"I was prepared to run," he admitted. "I don't know what they would have done to me."

The cult's constant obsession with violence and death corrupted the minds of almost all its members, and "pushed many people toward madness," Bainbridge said.

"For example, one man, an auto mechanic, had a ring with two prongs on it. He claimed the prongs gave out a special energy that enabled him to control other people . . . the whole cult lived in this kind of fantasy world."

— PAUL WEISSMAN

UNDERCOVER CULTIST William Bainbridge displa some of the symbols used by the group he infiltrated.